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The Proud Miss MacBride

John G. Saxe

Illustrated

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THE PROUD MISS MACBRIDE.

A LEGEND OF GOTHAM.

BY

JOHN G. SAXE.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY AUGUSTUS HOPPIN.

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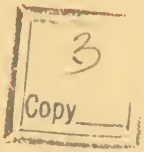

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

From Drawings by Augustus Hoppin.

The full-page Illustrations have been produced by the Patent Heliotype Process; the Vignettes are engraved on wood.

Stanza

I. "O terribly proud was Miss MacBride" (*full page*) . . . . . *Frontispiece*

IX. "Merely a fancy creation" . . . Page 14

XI. "She sang until she was hoarse" . . . 15

XII. "Her birth, indeed, was uncommonly high" 16

XIV. "No modern Harvey will ever succeed" . 18

XV. "Your family thread you can't ascend" . 19

XVI. "Rich was the old paternal MacBride" . 20

XVII. "Honest John" (*full page*) 21

XVIII. "He rose from his ashes" 22

XX. "A thriving tailor begged her hand" (*full page*) 23

XXI. "Another, whose sign was a golden boot" (*full page*) 24

XXIII. "A rich tobacconist comes and sues" (*full page*) 25

XXIII. "Up to snuff" 26

S272P

7544

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

XXIV. "A young attorney of winning grace" (*full page*) 26

XXVI. "A courtly fellow was Dapper Jim" (*full page*) 27

XXVIII. "Quite graciously relented" (*full page*) . 29

XXVIII. "To be a bride without the Mac" . . . 29

XXXII. "She tried
Her jaded spirits to rally" . . . 32

XXXVII. "Her elegant, ardent, plighted lover
Was the very first to forsake her" 36

XXXVIII. "And now the unhappy Miss MacBride
Bewails her lonely position" . . 37

THE PROUD MISS MACBRIDE.

"HONEST JOHN."

THE PROUD MISS MACBRIDE.

A LEGEND OF GOTHAM.

I.

OTERRIBLY proud was Miss MacBride,
The very personification of Pride,
As she minced along in Fashion's tide,
Adown Broadway, — on the proper side, —
When the golden sun was setting;

There was pride in the head she carried so high,
Pride in her lip, and pride in her eye,
And a world of pride in the very sigh
That her stately bosom was fretting;

II.

A sigh that a pair of elegant feet,
Sandalled in satin, should kiss the street,—
The very same that the vulgar greet
In common leather not over "neat,"—
For such is the common booting;
(And Christian tears may well be shed,
That even among our gentlemen bred,
The glorious day of Morocco is dead,

And Day and Martin are raining instead,
On a much inferior footing!)

III.

O, terribly proud was Miss MacBride,
Proud of her beauty, and proud of her pride.
And proud of fifty matters beside
That would n't have borne dissection:
Proud of her wit, and proud of her walk,
Proud of her teeth, and proud of her talk,
Proud of "knowing cheese from chalk,"
On a very slight inspection!

IV.

Proud abroad, and proud at home,
Proud wherever she chanced to come,
When she was glad, and when she was glum;
Proud as the head of a Saracen
Over the door of a tippling shop!—
Proud as a duchess, proud as a fop,
"Proud as a boy with a bran-new top,"
Proud beyond comparison!

V.

It seems a singular thing to say,
But her very senses led her astray

"A THRIVING TAILOR BEGGED HER HAND."

Respecting all humility;
In sooth, her dull auricular drum
Could find in *Humble* only a "hum,"
And heard no sound of "gentle" come,
In talking about gentility.

VI.

What *Lowly* meant she did n't know,
For she always avoided "everything low,"
With care the most punctilious.
And queerer still, the audible sound
Of "super-silly" she never had found
In the adjective supercilious!

VII.

The meaning of *Meek* she never knew,
But imagined the phrase had something to do
With "Moses," — a peddling German Jew,
Who, like all hawkers the country through,
Was a person of no position;
And it seemed to her exceedingly plain,
If the word was really known to pertain
To a vulgar German, it was n't germane
To a lady of high condition!

VIII.

Even her graces, — not her grace,
For that was in the "vocative case," —

Chilled with the touch of her icy face,
Sat very stiffly upon her;
She never confessed a favor aloud,
Like one of the simple, common crowd,
But coldly smiled, and faintly bowed,
As who should say: "You do me proud,
And do yourself an honor!"

IX.

And yet the pride of Miss MacBride,
Although it had fifty hobbies to ride,
Had really no foundation;
But, like the fabrics that gossips devise,—
Those single stories that often arise

And grow till they reach a four-story size,—
Was merely a fancy creation!

X.

'T is a curious fact as ever was known
In human nature, but often shown
Alike in castle and cottage,

"ANOTHER, WHOSE SIGN WAS A GOLDEN BOOT."

That pride, like pigs of a certain breed,
Will manage to live and thrive on "feed"
As poor as a pauper's pottage!

XI.

That her wit should never have made her vain,
Was, like her face, sufficiently plain;
And as to her musical powers,
Although she sang until she was hoarse,

And issued notes with a Banker's force,
They were just such notes as we never indorse
For any acquaintance of ours!

XII.

Her birth, indeed, was uncommonly high,
For Miss MacBride first opened her eye
Through a skylight dim, on the light of the sky;

But pride is a curious passion,
And in talking about her wealth and worth
She always forgot to mention her birth,
To people of rank and fashion!

XIII.

Of all the notable things on earth,
The queerest one is pride of birth,
Among our "fierce Democracie"!
A bridge across a hundred years,
Without a prop to save it from sneers,—
Not even a couple of rotten Peers,—
A thing for laughter, fleers, and jeers,
Is American aristocracy!

XIV.

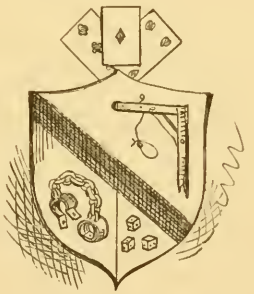
English and Irish, French and Spanish,
German, Italian, Dutch, and Danish,
Crossing their veins until they vanish
In one conglomeration!

So subtle a tangle of Blood, indeed,
No modern Harvey will ever succeed
In finding the circulation!

"A RICH TOBACCONIST COMES AND SUES."

XV.

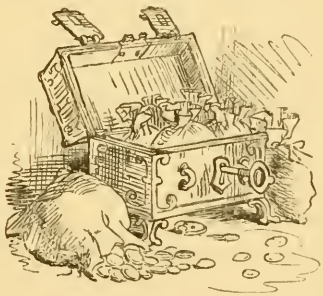
Depend upon it, my snobbish friend,
Your family thread you can't ascend,
Without good reason to apprehend
You may find it waxed at the farther end
By some plebeian vocation;



Or, worse than that, your boasted 'Line'
May end in a loop of stronger twine,
That plagued some worthy relation!

XVI.

But Miss MacBride hath something beside
Her lofty birth to nourish her pride,—
For rich was the old paternal MacBride,
According to public rumor;



And he lived "Up Town," in a splendid square,
And kept his daughter on dainty fare,
And gave her gems that were rich and rare,
And the finest rings and things to wear,
And feathers enough to plume her!

XVII.

An honest mechanic was John MacBride,
As ever an honest calling plied,
Or graced an honest ditty;
For John had worked in his early day,
In "Pots and Pearls," the legends say,
And kept a shop with a rich array
Of things in the soap and candle way,
In the lower part of the city.

XVIII.

No *rara avis* was honest John,
(That 's the Latin for "sable swan,")

Though, in one of his fancy flashes,
A wicked wag, who meant to deride,
Called honest John, "Old *Phœnix* MacBride,"
"Because he rose from his ashes!"

XIX.

Alack! for many ambitious beaux!
She hung their hopes upon her nose,

"A YOUNG ATTORNEY OF WINNING GRACE."

(The figure is quite Horatian!)*
Until from habit the member grew
As queer a thing as ever you knew
Turn up to observation!

XX.

A thriving tailor begged her hand,
But she gave "the fellow" to understand,
By a violent manual action,
She perfectly scorned the best of his clan,
And reckoned the ninth of any man
An exceedingly Vulgar Fraction!

* "Omnia suspendens naso."

XXI.

Another, whose sign was a golden boot,
Was mortified with a bootless suit,
In a way that was quite appalling;
For though a regular *sutor* by trade,
He was n't a suitor to suit the maid,
Who cut him off with a saw, — and bade
"The cobbler keep to his calling."

XXII.

(The Muse must let a secret out, —
There is n't the faintest shadow of doubt,
That folks who oftenest sneer and flout

At "the dirty, low mechanicals,"
Are they whose sires, by pounding their knees,
Or coiling their legs, or trades like these,
Contrived to win their children ease
From poverty's galling manacles.)

XXIII.

A rich tobacconist comes and sues,
And, thinking the lady would scarce refuse
A man of his wealth and liberal views,
Began, at once, with, "If you choose,—
And could you really love him—"
But the lady spoiled his speech in a huff,

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With an answer rough and ready enough,
To let him know she was up to snuff,
And altogether above him!

XXIV.

A young attorney of winning grace,
Was scarcely allowed to "open his face,"
Ere Miss MacBride had closed his case
With true judicial celerity;
For the lawyer was poor, and "seedy" to boot,
And to say the lady discarded his *suit*,
Is merely a double verity.

"A COURTLY FELLOW WAS DAPPER JIM."

XXV.

The last of those who came to court
Was a lively beau of the dapper sort,
"Without any visible means of support,"—
A crime by no means flagrant
In one who wears an elegant coat,
But the very point on which they vote
A ragged fellow "a vagrant."

XXVI.

A courtly fellow was Dapper Jim,
Sleek and supple, and tall and trim,
And smooth of tongue as neat of limb:
And, maugre his meagre pocket,

You 'd say, from the glittering tales he told,
That Jim had slept in a cradle of gold,
With Fortunatus to rock it!

XXVII.

Now Dapper Jim his courtship plied
(I wish the fact could be denied),
With an eye to the purse of the old MacBride,
And really "nothing shorter"!
For he said to himself, in his greedy lust,
"Whenever he dies, — as die he must, —
And yields to Heaven his vital trust,
He 's very sure to 'come down with his dust,'
In behalf of his only daughter."

XXVIII.

And the very magnificent Miss MacBride,
Half in love and half in pride,
Quite graciously relented;

And tossing her head, and turning her back,

No token of proper pride to lack,
To be a Bride without the "Mac,"
With much disdain, consented.

XXIX.

Alas! that people who 've got their box
Of cash beneath the best of locks,
Secure from all financial shocks,
Should stock their fancy with fancy stocks,
And madly rush upon Wall Street rocks,
Without the least apology;
Alas! that people whose money affairs
Are sound beyond all need of repairs,
Should ever tempt the bulls and bears
Of Mammon's fierce Zoölogy!

"QUITE GRACIOUSLY RELENTED."

XXX.

Old John MacBride, one fatal day,
Became the unresisting prey
Of Fortune's undertakers;
And staking his all on a single die,
His foundered bark went high and dry
Among the brokers and breakers!

XXXI.

At his trade again in the very shop
Where, years before, he let it drop,
He follows his ancient calling,—
Cheerily, too, in poverty's spite,

And sleeping quite as sound at night,
As when, at Fortune's giddy height,
He used to wake with a dizzy fright
From a dismal dream of falling.

XXXII.

But alas for the haughty Miss MacBride!
'T was such a shock to her precious pride,
She could n't recover, although she tried
Her jaded spirits to rally;

'T was a dreadful change in human affairs
From a Place "Up Town" to a nook "Up Stairs,"
From an Avenue down to an Alley!

XXXIII.

'T was little condolence she had, God wot,
From her "troops of friends," who had n't forgot
The airs she used to borrow;
They had civil phrases enough, but yet
'T was plain to see that their "deepest regret"
Was a different thing from Sorrow!

XXXIV.

They owned it could n't have well been worse,
To go from a full to an empty purse;
To expect a reversion and get a "reverse,"
Was truly a dismal feature;
But it was n't strange,— they whispered,— at all;
That the Summer of pride should have its Fall,
Was quite according to Nature!

XXXV.

And one of those chaps who make a pun,—
As if it were quite legitimate fun
To be blazing away at every one,
With a regular double-loaded gun,—

Remarked that moral transgression
Always brings retributive stings
To candle-makers, as well as kings:
And making light of cereous things,
Was a very wick-ed profession!

XXXVI.

And vulgar people, the saucy churls,
Inquired about "the price of Pearls,"
And mocked at her situation;
"She was n't ruined, — they ventured to hope, —
Because she was poor, she need n't mope, —
Few people were better off for soap,
And that was a consolation!"

XXXVII.

And to make her cup of woe run over,
Her elegant, ardent, plighted lover
Was the very first to forsake her:

He quite regretted the step, 't was true,—
The lady had pride enough "for two,"
But that alone would never do
To quiet the butcher and baker!

XXXVIII.

And now the unhappy Miss MacBride,
The merest ghost of her early pride,
Bewails her lonely position;

Cramped in the very narrowest niche,
Above the poor, and below the rich,
Was ever a worse condition?

MORAL.

Because you flourish in worldly affairs,
Don't be haughty, and put on airs,
With insolent pride of station!
Don't be proud, and turn up your nose
At poorer people in plainer clo'es,
But learn, for the sake of your soul's repose,
That wealth 's a bubble, that comes, — and goes!
And that all Proud Flesh, wherever it grows,
Is subject to irritation!

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